



Historic rally calls for immigrant rights

NEXT STEP – MAY DAY 2010

By Teresa Gutierrez
Washington, D.C.

On March 21 a multitude of immigrants and their supporters amassed in the largest demonstration for immigrant rights in Washington, D.C., in decades, if not ever.

There were at least 200,000 people at the biggest immigrant-rights rally in this country since 2006. The crowd was overwhelmingly Latino/a, but pockets of Koreans, Filipinos, Africans and Muslim immigrants and families were also there in proud attendance.

People traveled from as far away as Colorado, Texas and California. Homemade signs called on President Barack Obama to keep his promises for immigration reform and urged the government to stop dividing families.

The intentions of the main organizers of this historic demonstration for immigrant rights may have been complex and varied. But the world should make no mistake about it: Every single person who came to the demonstration was there to demand legalization.

Furthermore, they were confident that immigrants have earned legalization over and over — and are not asking but are demanding it.

It was reported that the huge size of the crowd was in large part due to the money that poured in from unions tied to the Democratic Party as well as from the Democratic Party itself. In fact one of the rally speakers was a representative of MoveOn.org.

Nonetheless, it was an encouraging day that especially made Latinos/as proud as the crowd over and over again chanted, "Si se puede!" (Yes, we can!)

When it was announced that President Obama would be addressing the rally, the crowd roared in approval.

Obama's intervention indeed made it one of the most interesting developments in this country since his election. In fact, this writer has never been to a progressive protest rally where a U.S. president has spoken.

While immigrants and their advocates may be buoyed by the huge turnout, it was also a day of concern and apprehension for anyone who is looking deeper into this issue.

Unfortunately, most of the speakers at the rally, including President Obama, repeated the demand for

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LOS ANGELES, MARCH 20.

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Unions, community groups challenge Detroit restructuring

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

During the week of March 15, corporate interests unveiled several initiatives to further usurp local control of Detroit.

Robert Bobb, the Detroit Public Schools emergency financial manager, announced that 45 school buildings would be closed by June. Bobb, an appointee of Gov. Jennifer Granholm, announced the plan at Renaissance High School to an invitation-only audience. The address was broadcast live over a number of major corporate radio and television outlets.

More than 100 activists and school employees picketed outside and then marched into the Renaissance auditorium, chanting, "This is our school!" Some protesters denounced the Skillman Foundation executives who were present for their role in dismantling Detroit's public school system.

According to the New York Times, the plan to close the 45 schools "would eliminate as many as 2,100 jobs, in the face of a deficit expected to peak at \$316.6 million and a dwindling student population." (March 17)

The Detroit Federation of Teachers immediately rejected the plan. At a March 17 community meeting, the Coalition of Detroit Public Schools Unions called for a mass march from DFT headquarters to DPS headquarters on March 23.

A city with an official unemployment rate of approximately 28 percent, a foreclosure problem that worsens every year, and city governmental leadership that works exclusively on behalf of corporate interests, Detroit will be further weakened with the privatization of public education and the firing of workers.

However, the attacks are not confined to this majority African-American city. There have been large-scale cutbacks and layoffs of public sector employees throughout the southeastern Michigan region. Schools will be closed in several suburban communities.

Nationally, the trend is also toward school closings and downsizing. The Kansas City school district announced the closing of 28 schools this year.

Educator Carol Dantzler-Harris wrote: "These school closings usually happen in areas that can least afford it. Some of the schools were in trouble prior to the country's economic woes; low performing schools result in parents pulling their children out to seek a better education. These schools have a difficult time attracting the best teachers and lack the resources they need." (advancenewsw.com, March 22)

Unions threaten to strike

In Detroit, city employees represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees have protested Mayor Dave Bing's attempts to impose a 10 percent wage cut and slash benefits. On March 16 AFSCME workers picketed outside the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center. More than 500 workers then attended a public hearing with the Detroit City Council's Internal Operations Committee.

The proposed benefit cuts include the requirement that employees purchase generic drugs; the elimination of paid lunch breaks; the suspension of tuition reimbursements; and the reduction of the age limit for dependents

covered by health care, from 22 to 19 years of age.

Chants of "Strike!" emanated from the crowd. "We have no choice but to shut the city down this time because we are not going to take these concessions," said Michael Mulholland, AFSCME Local 207 secretary-treasurer. (Detroit Free Press, March 18)

Richard Mack, an attorney representing AFSCME Council 25, called the proposed cuts "an effort to break the union, to break all these unions."

Meanwhile, the Bing administration is moving forward with schemes to "rightsized" the city, in line with a corporate community agenda. A private foundation, the Kresge Foundation, is paying a so-called urban planner to implement plans to reconfigure the city. This will result in the mass dislocation of residents.

Even the Detroit News acknowledged that Kresge's participation "underscores the influence of private foundations in Mayor Dave Bing's downsizing initiative. Foundations, including Kresge, helped fund Data Driven Detroit's block-by-block study of vacancies and housing conditions that could serve as a blueprint for neighborhood consolidations." (March 18)

A spokesperson for Mayor Bing said that the city's downsizing team "will expand as the effort progresses."

Plans to slash pensions, axe Medical Center

Plans were recently announced for a state legislature bill that would effectively eliminate the elected municipal pension board, which oversees in excess of \$5 billion in funds contributed by city workers. The legislation would transfer control from the pension boards to the Municipal Employees' Retirement System, which faces an underfunding crisis.

The corporate media have accused the pension boards of making questionable investments. However, most employees and retirees feel that the city pension system is run efficiently.

In addition, the nonprofit Detroit Medical Center has announced a proposal for Vanguard Health System to acquire the institution. DMC board chairperson Steve D'Arcy called the proposal "the biggest private investment in the city of Detroit in history." (Crain's Detroit Business, March 21)

Detroit Receiving Hospital, a component of the DMC, provides health care to uninsured people. The takeover by Vanguard, a Tennessee-based firm, could change the entire character of the DMC and its policy on treating uninsured patients.

Fightback efforts continue

On March 23 a mass protest will take place outside Bing's "State of the City" address. The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs and AFSCME locals are mobilizing for the demonstration, which will demand a freeze on layoffs and pay cuts along with a moratorium on debt service payments to the banks by the city of Detroit.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition is demanding that Mayor Bing declare an economic state of emergency in Detroit and that Gov. Granholm enact a halt to all foreclosures, evictions and utility shut-offs. On March 27, the coalition will hold a Town Hall meeting to strategize a fightback and call for a massive federal public works program to put people back to work in Detroit and around the country. □

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THE HEALTH CARE BILL: What it means for workers

By Fred Goldstein

Tens of millions of people in this country were hoping to be delivered from the clutches of the ruthless profiteers who control the health care system and were hoping for universal health care. But the very opposite has happened.

The latest so-called health care reform bill, signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23, has consolidated and legalized the position of the health care profiteers as the central force in the system of health care — under minimal supervision and regulation by the capitalist state.

Furthermore, this bill has been passed by bargaining away women's reproductive rights and the rights of undocumented and documented immigrants. Its effect is to destroy solidarity while it turns its back on millions of mostly poor women and immigrants.

A statement by Terry O'Neill, president of the National Organization for Women, explained that one of the bill's effects is to make public funding of abortion impossible and private funding almost impossible. She wrote that the bill "imposes a bizarre requirement on insurance plan enrollees who buy coverage through the health insurance exchanges to write two monthly checks (one for an abortion care rider and one for all other health care). Even employers will have to write two separate checks for each of their employees requesting the abortion rider."

O'Neill also wrote that the "bill imposes harsh restrictions on the ability of immigrants to access health care, imposing a five-year waiting period on permanent, legal residents before they are eligible for assistance such as Medicaid, and prohibiting undocumented workers even to use their own money to purchase health insurance through an exchange. These provisions ... are there because of ugly anti-immigrant sentiment, and must be eliminated."

Those who stubbornly and valiantly fought for some form of universal national health care were shunted aside by the Democratic Party leadership and the Obama administration. Single payer was pushed off the agenda and substituted with the minuscule provision for a "public option." This was mainly a sop in order to change the subject. The Obama administration had early on negotiated with the health care industry and agreed that there would not be a public option.

Thus health care is still to be sold as a commodity on the capitalist market for profit, instead of being the right that it should be. It is in stark contrast to the socialized health care in Cuba, for example, where despite a U.S. blockade that has impoverished the country for decades, health care is free and accessible to everyone. This is because Cuba's socialist system means people's needs are a priority, not profits like under capitalism.

One of the features of this bill is that the masses have been kept in the dark about the process and the bill itself from the beginning to the end. Only the politicians and the lobbyists from the various health care industries and medical professions were able to follow the inner course of the negotiations. Now that it is over, various bourgeois experts have surfaced to "explain" the bill.

Workers to wait until 2014 while 45,000 a year die

The details that are buried in the bill will only come out over time, if ever. Here are some of the major features of the bill

that have come out.

To begin with, even the most optimistic estimates project that 23 million people will still be uninsured in 2014.

The bill imposes onerous conditions on millions of uninsured who, starting in 2014, would be forced to buy health insurance from an insurance company or face a fine. This is the bill's version of giving wider coverage. It was

the result of a deal cut with the insurance companies to widen their diminishing customer base, which has suffered during the

economic crisis as millions lost their jobs and their insurance, and to ensure future billions in profit.

In 2014 workers and the middle class are to be thrust into one of 50 state-run exchanges. This further atomizes the working class by leaving the burden on the individual to find "affordable" insurance on the Internet. Even when insurance premiums are affordable, the copayments and deductibles can be in the thousands of dollars and make it unaffordable to actually use the insurance.

Medicare Advantage, home care and hospital payments are to be cut by \$200 billion. This is a threat to seniors and the disabled, despite assurances that nothing will be cut. Cuts will be made in the reimbursement to the private insurance companies that work through Medicare Advantage; they will surely reduce services.

Adults with pre-existing conditions will have to wait until 2014, when they can no longer be denied coverage. Poor families of four earning less than \$29,327 — 16 million people — will have to wait five years to be covered by Medicaid. Meanwhile 45,000 preventable deaths take place every year because of lack of insurance, according to Harvard Medical School. Half of all bankruptcies are due to medical costs.

The bill, of course, has some positive elements that cover the most outrageous and universally hated practices of the insurance companies. Any positive elements should be closely studied by the workers and taken full advantage of. Many of the practices to be eliminated were exposed in Michael Moore's popular and widely viewed film, "Sicko."

In the short run, the insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage if you are sick. They will not be able to put a lifetime cap on coverage. And they cannot deny children access because of a pre-existing condition. Youth up to 26 years old can stay on their parents' insurance plan, although there may be an additional premium.

But millions of workers will still have to rely on their bosses to get their health care. If you lose your job, you still lose your health care. In this era of layoffs, mass unemployment and underemployment, there is an epidemic of people losing their employer-based coverage. And if you are allowed to keep your health care after you are laid off, few can afford to pay a group rate, let alone an individual rate.

Most important is that the insurance companies will be in charge of the immediate review process. The Department of Health and Human Services will eventually have a higher level of review. But the companies are expert at lying, manipulat-



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Health Care Is a Right

Medicare for All

Stop the Profiteers

ing and, in the long run, suffering fines in order to avoid giving coverage that is more expensive than the fines. It is a case of the fox retaining the right to guard the chicken coop.

Social Security and Medicare

The conventional wisdom being touted by the Democratic Party leadership is that this health care bill is in the tradition of the establishment of Social Security and Medicare.

In fact, the opposite is true. Marxists must try to understand the difference, not just in terms of personalities or parties, but in seeing the objective circumstances in which these different pieces of legislation were passed and what the class differences are. The most important factor is to view the relationship of class forces that existed then and that exist now.

The Social Security bill was passed in 1935 as part of the Franklin Roosevelt "New Deal." But it was passed only after a period of mass struggle against unemployment, the famous veterans' Bonus March in Washington, D.C., and the break up of the veterans' encampment by federal troops in a pitched battle. It followed the general strikes in San Francisco, Minneapolis, Minn., and Toledo, Ohio, in 1934.

Even at that, it was a compromise in which the bosses wound up having to pay only half of Social Security, with workers paying the other half. But it became a working-class right. The money was held by the government for the workers and paid out every month by the government.

The Medicaid bill was passed in 1965 and the Medicare legislation was passed in 1965 as part of President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" program. These bills were not passed because the capitalist government suddenly became socially conscious. They came after 10 years of the Civil Rights movement, massive rebellions in the streets of Harlem, N.Y., and Los Angeles, and a growing national liberation movement right here in the U.S.

Just like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid became a legal and political right of the working class and the poor. They were not turned over to private companies and put on the capitalist market as commodities.

The present health care bill reflects the fact that the working class movement, including the movement of the oppressed, has been on the defensive for a long time and has not yet begun to fight back.

Consequently, the fate of the health care bill was really fought out by different factions within the ruling class and their two political parties without any significant intervention by the masses. Secret deals were made with the pharmaceutical and hospital lobbies as well as with elements

in the health insurance industry. When these deals became known, there was no mass response. The bosses had their way, relatively unobstructed by any threat from below. The labor movement leadership restricted itself to minuscule protests and lobbying. And the communities and the political movement were unable to mobilize, despite militant attempts by various single-payer groups.

Fight racist, right-wing counterattacks

But this should lead into the next phase of the struggle. The great problem for the workers' movement is that the health care bill, as minimal as it is, has been fought tooth-and-nail by the Republicans and the extreme right-wing Tea Party movement, which encompasses outright fascists. The Republicans and the corporations have in fact worked with the Tea Party movement to fan the flames of racism and anti-gay and anti-immigrant sentiment.

There was a fascist-like display at the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., the day the bill was passed, when a mob shouted racist epithets at African-American representative and former civil rights leader John Lewis of Georgia and spat on another Black legislator. The mob then accosted Rep. Barney Frank of Massachusetts, who is gay, and hurled anti-gay slurs at him. It is notable that this mob was allowed by the Capitol police to get right up in the faces of the lawmakers.

The right wing tried to bring down the Obama presidency over the health care bill. There is already talk among the Republicans of trying to overturn the bill and start up a new town-hall-style, ultra-rightist mobilization.

This fact does not make the bill any better. But it does mean that the workers' movement, the progressive and revolutionary movement, must work together to assertively combat any reactionary and racist counterattack by the right while at the same time demanding real universal health care.

It is not known at this time if right-wing elements will succeed. But the progressive movement was taken aback during the town hall campaign last fall, when the first right-wing assaults were launched against the health care bill while whipping up a racist campaign against Obama.

Forewarned is forearmed. The fight for health care can be carried into the struggle against the right without having to abandon a working-class, progressive position. Fighting the racists and getting in their face while demanding universal quality health care and Medicare for all can and must be done. "Health care is a right!" should become the battle cry of the movement, along with pro-immigrant, pro-abortion rights, anti-racist slogans and so on. This is the way to resist any right-wing, racist mobilization based on opposition to the health care bill.

The Democratic Party leadership has given in all along the line. The workers, oppressed communities, students and youth all have a stake in this struggle. It can be united with the struggle for jobs, against the budget cuts and foreclosures, and to save public education. All these fronts in the class struggle form the basis to come together in People's Assemblies or other organs of popular power to unite to launch a powerful, anti-capitalist movement. □

A travesty for women & the environment

By Deirdre Griswold

It seemed like a scandalous disconnect, a case of the right brain not knowing what the left brain was doing.

On March 12 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations announced the appointment of a High-level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing. The group is supposed to mobilize the money to help poorer countries deal with climate change, which had been promised them during the U.N. conference in Copenhagen in December.

March 12 also happened to be the last day of a two-week session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, which of course had received high praise from Ban and other officials. At those meetings, reports were given on how climate change impacts women and their children even more severely than men.

Ban had also issued a statement on International Women's Day saying that "empowering women is central to all other millennium development goals."

And, according to Selina Rust, writing from the U.N. on March 18 for the Inter Press Service news agency, "Ban himself gave a speech last September underlining the importance of 'an environment where women are the key decision makers on climate change, and play an equally central role in carrying out these decisions.'

"We must do more to give greater say to women in addressing the climate challenge," he said at the time."

It was all just talk.

Of the 19 appointees to the high-level climate change group announced March 12 by the secretary-general, not one was a woman. Jaws dropped. Women's groups still gathered at the U.N. were shocked and outraged.

Was it just an oversight? Certainly from the point of view of public relations, it was a huge blunder to make such an announcement that day. But leaving timing aside, this was not unusual. High-level appointments in which women are shut out get made all the time by capitalist governments and supposedly international bodies. Sometimes they include just a token woman — something the secretary-general's office scrambled to do once news of his all-male appointees hit the fan.

It should be noted that the meetings on the Status of Women, like many other progressive activities that use the U.N. as a venue, are organized through the General Assembly, which currently has 192 member states. However, the secretary-general of the U.N. is nominated by the much smaller Security Council and is subject to a veto by any of its five permanent members.

Thus it is the Security Council — dominated for decades by U.S., British and French imperialism, which occupy three of five permanent seats — that pulls the strings in matters like these appointments. They are the ones who get to decide what is, to them, the most important question regarding climate change: money.

They also represent highly industri-

alized capitalist countries whose drive for profits is responsible for most of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that is causing climate change.

The usual suspects

So who were on Ban's list of appointees? They included:

- **Lawrence H. Summers**, current director of the White House's National Economic Council, who in 2006 had to resign as president of Harvard after he had tangled with African-American activist professor Cornel West and also had said in a speech that the underrepresentation of women in the top levels of scientific academia could be due to a "different availability of aptitude at the high end."

- **George Soros**, the multibillionaire currency speculator and founder of the Open Society Institute, which played a big role in getting control of the media in Eastern Europe and engineering the overthrow of the workers' states there. This led to a disastrous decline in living conditions, especially for women, and soaring rates of sexual trafficking.

- **British Prime Minister Gordon Brown**, who has alienated much of his Labour Party constituency, but pleased Washington, by sending thousands of British troops to Afghanistan.

- **Executives from the central banks** of both France and Germany.

Of course, this group would have no credibility without also having members from the global South. But the imperialists made sure that the person who is co-chair, along with Brown, is someone they can trust: Meles Zenawi. He became prime minister of Ethiopia after an imperialist campaign brought down the revolutionary government there. His troops have collaborated with the Pentagon in the invasion and bombing of Somalia.

The IPS article on the Status of Women hearings cited a report by the British-based Women's Environmental Network showing that more than 10,000 women die each year from weather-related disasters such as tropical storms and droughts, compared to about 4,500 men. Women, it says, are also the main producers of food, providing 70 percent of agricultural labor in sub-Saharan Africa, and so are particularly affected by reduced agricultural output. And because of diminishing water supplies in many developing countries due to climate change, women must travel farther each day to collect water and fuel.

Any group tasked with finding the money for poorer countries to survive climate change that does not include genuine representatives of the people affected will bend to the will of the financiers, the bankers and the imperialist politicians. What has just happened is a travesty not only for women but for all people struggling against the horrific consequences of unbridled capitalism. □

Grocery warehouse workers on strike

On March 18 nearly 200 members and supporters of striking United Food and Commercial Workers Local 791 picketed and held the line outside Shaw's Supermarket in Dorchester, Mass., in solidarity with 310 women and men workers from the warehouse distribution center in Methuen, Mass. The warehouse distributes most of the perishable foods such as meat, fruits, dairy and vegetables to 194 Shaw's and Star Market supermarkets across New England.

Workers voted on March 7 to strike to fight what they termed "substandard" wage increases and skyrocketing costs of health care insurance. UFCW Local 791 represents approximately 5,500 members in 36 Shaw's Supermarkets in Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well as distribution centers in Methuen and Wells, Maine.

Shaw's belongs to a supermarket chain that is part of Supervalu, a company that also owns Jewel-Osco Brands and Albertsons. Supervalu's CEO, Jeffrey Noddle, receives an annual total compensation of \$3.55 million, according to Forbes.com.

A fund has been established for the workers affected by the strike. Contributions payable to "UFCW Local 791 Methuen D.C. Strike Fund" can be mailed to UFCW Local 791, 55 Norfolk Ave., South Easton, MA 02375.

— Report and photo by Liz Green



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Low-Wage Capitalism

Fred Goldstein

Community group honors women organizers

Special to Workers World
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Operation POWER (People Organizing and Working for Empowerment and Respect), a Black grassroots activist organization, held a special International Women's Day forum March 20 at the House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn, N.Y. March 8 marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of IWD.

The program organizers presented awards to three women organizers for "years of dedication and activism" — Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Collette Pean of the December 12 Movement and Monica Moorehead of Workers World Party. Gwen Debrow from the New York Free Mumia Coalition accepted the award on behalf of Pam Africa.

Debrow spoke about an important mobilization where activists will be traveling to Washington, D.C., on April 26 to demand that the U.S. Department of Justice grant a civil rights investigation on behalf of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Abu-Jamal, a victim of racist and prosecutorial abuse, is once again



PHOTO: DANIEL K. OSEI

Inez Barron, Monica Moorehead, Gwen Debrow, Collette Pean, New York City Councilperson Charles Barron and Paul Washington, former aide to Charles Barron.

facing the real threat of being executed.

Pean spoke on the ongoing efforts by the Brooklyn-based D12 Movement to assist the Haitian people still recovering from the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake. Pean was born in Haiti before her family moved to the U.S. when she was a toddler.

Moorehead dedicated her award to two of her mentors who have passed away — Dorothy Ballan, a founding member of WWP, and Consuela Lee, Moorehead's mother, who was a jazz musician and executive director of the Spring Tree/Snow Hill Institute for the Performing Arts.

Moorehead invited the audience to attend the March 27 "Stop the Violence Against Women" march and rally in Manhattan.

The program was chaired by New York State Assemblyperson Inez Barron. Brenda Stokely from the Million Worker March Movement also made remarks. □

100 years of International Women's Day Remembering Clara Zetkin

By Kathy Durkin

In late August 1910, 100 women gathered at the Workers' Assembly Hall in Copenhagen, Denmark. Theirs was a historic meeting, the Second International Socialist Women's Conference.

Delegates from 16 European countries and the U.S. representing trade unions, women's organizations and socialist parties supported universal women's suffrage and women workers' rights, including the 8-hour day, maternity leave and health insurance.

Their unanimous vote instituted an annual International Women's Day, to be commemorated globally with coordinated actions of solidarity and struggle among women workers. The delegates were inspired by New York City struggles led mainly by women immigrant workers — a 1908 demonstration and the 1909 three-month garment workers' strike, "the uprising of the 20,000."

The delegates also felt stirrings of women workers in their own countries. European women had been pouring into the workforce, hired to do low-paid, unsafe and horrific jobs, as growing capitalist economies needed their labor power. Determined to fight for political and economic rights when they had none, women workers joined unions and socialist organizations at a time of great political mobilizing and ferment.

On International Women's Day, just one year after its founding, 1 million women marched throughout Europe for jobs and an end to discrimination.

The Copenhagen conference's chairperson and IWD's founder was Clara Zetkin, a leader of the left wing of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), which was a strong force in the Socialist International. She headed the International Women's Secretariat.

An adamant fighter for working women, Zetkin had agitated for 21 years to establish IWD. For 25 years she edited the SPD's magazine for working women, "Equality" ("Die Gleichheit"), which had 80,000 readers in 1910.

Zetkin saw IWD as a way to build solidarity among women workers of different countries while they fought for their rights as workers. By building these international bonds, she also sought to break down the walls of national chauvinism and encourage anti-war sentiment.

This came to fruition, as women organized and marched all over Europe on IWD in 1913 and 1914 to protest the looming world war.

Zetkin sought to raise class consciousness among women workers, to build the working-class movement, and to push the class struggle forward to challenge capitalism, which she saw as the source of women's oppression and exploitation. She aimed to win political women workers to a socialist perspective, which she saw as critical to building the anti-capitalist movement.

Illuminating the strong role women workers play in the class struggle, Russian textile workers led a 90,000-member strike for "peace, land and bread" on IWD

in 1917, which led to the czar's ouster. This paved the way for a workers' revolution which established the Soviet Union, the first country to legalize women's equality in 1921.

Zetkin had many conversations with Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin that demonstrated a high level of understanding of women's oppression. They discussed what concrete steps to take to bring about women's emancipation under socialism.

Internationalism then and now

As a principled internationalist, Zetkin fiercely opposed imperialist war. She, along with her close friend Rosa Luxemburg and others in the SPD's left wing, defied their party's pro-war majority and declared their opposition to Germany's entry into World War I.

Zetkin was jailed repeatedly for her opposition to the war. In 1915 she organized the "illegal" International Socialist Women's Conference in Berlin, which was attended by delegates from warring countries who called for peace.

In 1915 the British journal "Labour Women" wrote, "[Zetkin] is socialist in her very fiber and she is a fighter ready to face death rather than give way in any issue of import in the people's struggle." (www.greenleft.org.au)

After the war Zetkin left the SPD and was one of the founders of a new German Communist Party.

Zetkin deplored the injustice of racism and protested U.S. Jim Crow laws. In the 1930s she joined the international campaign against the convictions of the Scottsboro defendants, nine African-American youth who were being railroaded to prison and execution.

In 1932, as German fascism menaced, Zetkin, despite death threats, addressed the Aug. 30 opening of the Parliament (Reichstag) as a CP delegate. Nearly blind at age 75, Zetkin began the session with a one-hour militant denunciation of war and fascism.

After the CP was outlawed in Germany, which was only months after Zetkin's fi-



nal stand in Berlin, she went to the Soviet Union, where she passed away in 1933.

The world has changed a great deal since Zetkin founded IWD in 1910. Struggles persist against imperialist war, high food prices and for working women's and children's needs.

However, decades of colonialism, imperialism and national oppression — with the underdevelopment of continents; theft of land and resources; and global exploitation of labor, including forced migration and sweatshops — have greatly broadened the Copenhagen demands of 1910.

A global socialist women's conference today would first invite women from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean — those whose countries have been oppressed by capitalist exploitation and imperialist war and occupation. Invited would be working and oppressed women from all communities in the U.S. — women who toil in the offices, factories and fields — documented and undocumented; the unemployed; those hit by foreclosures and evictions;

those without health care, child care or adequate food; youth, seniors, the disabled and prisoners.

Their grievances and issues would be heard and demands formulated. That conference would strongly oppose racism, anti-immigrant biases, sexism, lesbian/gay/bi and trans oppression and all bigotry.

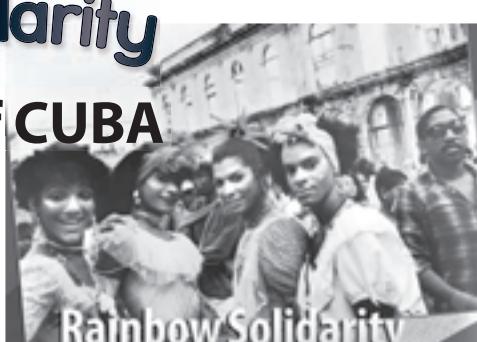
Clara Zetkin was right on these counts that are ever more timely: International solidarity among working women is essential, as is the urgent need for women to organize to get rid of capitalism and fight for socialism.

That is the legacy of 100 years of International Women's Day. □

Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

Leslie Feinberg, author of Stone Butch Blues

This ground-breaking book documents revolutionary Cuba's inspiring trajectory of progress towards liberation of sexualities, genders and sexes. Available at Leftbooks.com



Rainbow Solidarity

Georgia students fight back

Reacting to reports that hundreds of millions of dollars in budget cuts are under consideration by Georgia lawmakers, over 400 students from across the state's university system marched and rallied at the State Capitol in Atlanta on March 15.

Armed with colorful signs and multiple bullhorns, their chants echoed off the buildings. "Education is under attack — What do we do?" called out the members of the newly-formed Georgia Students for Public Higher Education. "Stand up, fight back!" roared the crowd.

The state's universities and colleges have already enacted fee hikes and higher tuition in response to previous cuts in state funding for education. Besides the increased costs, students fear the elimination of programs and majors, staff layoffs and furloughs, and overcrowded classrooms and labs, all of which will undermine the quality of their education.

Following a spirited strategy session held in the park adjacent to Georgia State University, these fired-up student activists returned to their campuses determined to safeguard access to public higher education as a right for all.

— Dianne Mathiowetz



PHOTO: AL VIOLA

Comedian's plans for Cleveland aren't funny

By Caleb T. Maupin
Cleveland



FILM REVIEW

Cleveland, like many other industrial cities in the "rust belt," has suffered terribly in the economic crisis. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that unemployment in Ohio is at 10.8 percent. (bls.gov) The Cleveland Police Department wages a reign of terror against oppressed people, and seeks to jail young Rebecca Whitby for daring to file a complaint after suffering a police assault in her own home.

Cleveland has just closed 16 school buildings in an effort to reduce costs and deal with funding cutbacks. Neither the communities near the schools nor the students' parents were consulted, sparking community outrage and protests.

Former Cleveland resident Drew Carey, now a million-dollar entertainer in Los Angeles, proclaims he has the solu-

tion. This former sit-com star and current host of "The Price is Right" has produced a four-part documentary called "Reason Saves Cleveland." In it Carey claims that the answer to the woes of his former hometown is extreme cutbacks, privatizations and charter schools. (reason.tv)

Carey's condescending film gives a distorted history of Cleveland, littered with factual omissions. He claims the boom in Cleveland's economy following WWII was due to "a business friendly climate." He never mentions how the Cleveland auto workers occupied General Motors' Fisher Body plant as part of the 1937 sit-down wave, which started nearby with the Akron rubber workers, and how these strikes won decent wages and union rights for workers and their families.

Carey never mentions the struggles of oppressed people in Cleveland, who rose up heroically against racism numerous

times, such as in 1968 when Ahmed Evans did battle with the brutal, racist Cleveland Police Department, or the famous Hough rebellion when the Black working class took to the streets after a restaurant owner hung an illegal Jim Crow-style sign in front of his business establishment.

Cleveland was hardly pro-business when it was the site of the Ohio Industrial Organizing Council, part of the CIO, a grouping of unions that at the time was a radical departure from the AFL. This largely Cleveland-based union was known for its militancy and fighting spirit. Cleveland also was the site of the founding convention of the Trade Union Unity League, a coalition of trade unions which proclaimed the overthrow of capitalism as one of its founding principles.

The TUUL led numerous strikes among Kentucky miners, southern textile workers and countless other groups of workers who were left abandoned by the right-

wing AFL. Unlike the other unions of the time, both the TUUL and the CIO made a point of not participating in racist demagogic as was common among their rivals in organized labor.

The TUUL was known for appointing Black communist Harry Haywood to lead the strike of mostly white Pennsylvania miners in order to make a strong stance against racism. The CIO refused to back or defend "hate strikes" by white workers who opposed workplace integration, and was a key ally of the emerging Civil Rights movement.

Carey's solution to the educational woes of Cleveland seems to be the destruction of the public school system, replacing it with schools run for profit, also called charter schools.

Cleveland resident Kadie Huntsman told Workers World about her experiences as a student at "Life Skills," one of the city's charter schools. She said that instead of being taught, she sat at a computer clicking through screens of information while nonunion, low-paid teachers sat silently watching at the end of the room, without a contract and subject to "fire at will" employment.

Greg Owens, another veteran of an Ohio charter school, told WW of how the schools routinely fail students in order to receive more tax dollars to fund teaching "troubled youth." This practice is sometimes worth three times as much in profits for the school-corporation.

Carey's "Reason Saves Cleveland" series calls for massive deregulation, cutbacks and destruction of nearly all the gains won by years of struggle on the part of Cleveland workers and oppressed people. The producers of his film, associated with Reason magazine, are openly anti-working class.

The answer for workers and oppressed people in Cleveland is not the economic self-mutilation of Drew Carey's plan to "save" Cleveland, or the racism, sexism and extreme bigotry of the right-wing elements who funded this "documentary," revising Cleveland's history and extolling the virtues of poverty, deregulation and attacks on working people.

The answer is for the workers and oppressed people of Cleveland to join together and fight back in their own interests, demanding their basic human rights to employment, health care, quality education and freedom from repression. □

Protesters target health care for profit

On March 19 activists for universal, single payer and Medicare-for-all health care rallied and marched through the upscale high-rise shopping and office complex, Embarcadero 2, in the San Francisco financial district. They attempted to enter the local office of the "health non-care for profit" Anthem Blue Cross California, a subsidiary of WellPoint Inc., a health care corporation with \$9 billion in annual profits.

They carried signs saying, "Corporate Insurance Kills" and "Healthcare YES, Insurance Companies NO," and chanted, "You say health care! We say wealth care!" and "What do we want? Single payer! When do we want it? Now!"

The marchers were prevented from entering the office by four "suits in authority" and uniformed San Francisco cops. A spokesperson from Direct Action for Single Payer, Kate Raphael, who was leading the attempt to enter, then requested that the two primary targets of the action, WellPoint CEO Angela Brady and Anthem Blue Cross California President Leslie Margolin, come outside to speak to the crowd.

After attaching bright yellow crime scene tape to the doorway, Raphael read a warrant for grand theft and profiteering, naming Brady and Margolin. When, after a delay, the activists were informed



that neither corporate head would speak to them nor send a lackey to speak for them, the group angrily chanted, "We'll be back!"

For more information, see www.actforsinglepayer.org

— Report and photo
by Joan Marquardt

Thousands take part in HK on J march

Youth & students demand jobs, no segregation

By Laurel Ashton, Andy Koch and Eva Panjwani
Raleigh, N.C.

On the steps of the North Carolina General Assembly, thousands of people from over 100 progressive organizations from across the state came together Feb. 27 in downtown Raleigh around a diverse 14-point People's Agenda. This "People's Assembly" is the most visible part of the HK on J (Historic Thousands on Jones Street) movement, which has won same-day voter registration and other important progressive reforms in the state.

Organized by the North Carolina NAACP, HK on J encompasses struggles for workers' rights, civil rights, health care reform, the environment, and education and housing advocacy, among other issues.

People gathered in the morning in front of Shaw University, the historic birthplace of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Thousands marched through the center of downtown Raleigh for social justice and in support of the People's Agenda, which demands that North Carolina abolish the racially-biased death penalty and mandatory sentencing laws; put young people to work to save the environment and fight for environmental justice; have collective bargaining rights for public sector workers and worker safety; and provide high-quality, well-funded and diverse schools for all children and youth.

This year's movement is especially important considering the economic crisis hitting working people and the threat of resegregation of public schools in Wilmington, Wake and Wayne counties.

Speakers ranged from the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, president of the North Carolina NAACP, to Jocelyn Wilson, a Wake County student at Enloe High

School. Addressing the People's Assembly as a representative of the organized student resistance to the new resegregationist school board, Wilson identified true diversity in public schools to be an essential component of education. "Diversity is not an option," she said. "It's a necessity."

A diverse group of youth marched together as the Youth and Jobs Contingent, giving visibility and voice to the need for both quality education and jobs for all young people. The contingent stood in solidarity with the demands of the local March 4th National Day of Action to Defend Public Education coalition: Stop resegregation of public schools, stop tuition and fee increases at public universities, end teacher layoffs and rehire all laid-off workers, and provide in-state status and financial aid to all immigrant students. The contingent also called for the creation of a federally-funded jobs program for youth.

Alicia Sidney, a Raleigh FIST member whose two children will be affected by the move to stop bussing for diversity in Wake County, also spoke before the HK on J People's Assembly. She warned of the burden that our decisions represent for children and youth down the road. "Do we really want our children to grow up without personal understanding of children from different backgrounds?" Sidney asked. "Do we really want to build another wall that will only prove an obstacle for future generations?"

The contingent was also organized in hopes of establishing a standing youth organization around these issues, called HK on J Youth. After the march, members of the Youth and Jobs Contingent and its supporters met at the Zydeco Café for an open-mic meeting and planning session. Two of the main focuses of HK on J Youth



WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

are the continued fight against the resegregation of schools and for a federally-funded public jobs program.

The writers are members of Raleigh FIST — Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

Transit Authority forced to meet with students

By Tony Murphy
New York

The dynamic New York City youth movement against the Metropolitan Transit Authority's subway cutbacks and layoffs reached a new level in March, when Bronx students forced a meeting with MTA head Jay Walder.

The MTA's hopes to get through the week of public hearings unscathed were dashed when, at the Manhattan public hearing on March 4, high school senior Adolfo Abreu confronted Walder and demanded he hold an additional hearing with students.

Walder attempted to brush off the question, but Abreu wouldn't back down. Hundreds of audience members supported Abreu, telling Walder, "Answer him!" Outside the hearing, police strained to keep out hundreds of protesting students and members of Transport Workers Union Local 100 at the end rally of the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education.

The MTA chairperson was forced to give in, and agreed to meet with the students on March 17. The meeting itself, between Abreu's group, the Urban Youth Collaborative, and Walder, produced a partial victory: an MTA vote on eliminating free student Metrocards, originally scheduled for March 24, is now postponed to June.

The movement is now in a position to make further demands — and especially to challenge the idea that the MTA is forced to make cuts because it is out of money.

This agency that is supposedly out of money — "cash-strapped," as the media describe it — pays hundreds of millions of dollars a month to banks and Wall Street firms for debt service. Debt service is the part of the MTA's budget that goes to making payments on the money it owes to these companies.

The MTA's total debt service obligation — meaning the money it owes but hasn't paid back yet — is reportedly \$28 billion. Most of what it is paying is just interest on this debt, which means that the banks get hundreds of millions of dollars for doing nothing.

To explain this obscene transfer of

wealth — all the more outrageous in the wake of the bank bailouts — the MTA has put out a cover story that has been picked up by the media and repeated by some transit advocates.

The MTA has been forced to take out billions in loans, the story goes, because the city and state have drastically reduced contributions to public transportation. While it is true that the city and state have reduced their contributions to public transit, this fact has intensified the MTA's domination by the banks. It didn't cause it.

Back in the 1920s, banks were impatient with the bonds they bought from city and state governments, which were limited by their constitutions in how much debt they could carry. So under pressure from Wall Street, in 1927 New York state began to create "authorities." Authorities could owe unlimited amounts of money to Wall Street. The banks liked that. In 1953, the New York City Transit Authority, now known as the MTA, was formed.

So the MTA has been a servant to Wall Street for decades. The debt service that gets bigger every year goes back that far as well.

Some transit advocates embrace the false argument that the MTA's cutbacks stem from chronic underfunding by the city and state because it appears to provide a target for making demands on these governments, which are, after all, supposed to serve us.

But city and state budgets are also being looted by the banks. Last year, New York City paid \$13 billion in debt service. When the MTA demands that the mayor or governor save them, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Gov. David Paterson just shrug.

This is another reason that Wall Street prefers to deal with authorities. They're one step removed from the politicians, who are supposed to be accountable to the people.

But against all of these shell games, the students have broken through. Now that the banks have been bailed out and Wall Street executives have received their bonuses, it's obvious that the money is there. The only question now is who is going to get it. □

Help to publish:

'What is Marxism all about?'

World View Forum is publishing this guide for activists that explains Marxist terminology in non-technical language. Terms like "imperialism," "self-determination" and "socialism" are defined and illustrated. The Marxist definitions of these words help sharpen an understanding of society from a working-class perspective.

The book, which was first published in the 1970s as a pamphlet, has been revised, updated and edited by young activists in Fight Imperialism, Stand Together — FIST. It gives relevant analysis about the conditions faced by millions of people in capitalist society today, as the economic crisis hits working and oppressed people, including students and youth.

It is also a guide to action. This book is a must-read for students and youth organizers involved in the many struggles going on today across the country. Its short, concise chapters make it very usable as an organizing tool as well as for discussion groups, classes and meetings.

FIST organizers are committed to getting this new edition of "What is Marxism all about?" to student and youth activists nationwide.

Your help is needed! All aspects of writing, editing, proofreading, cover and book design were done by voluntary labor. However, printing and binding costs are high, causing us to turn to readers and activists for financial support.

Your contribution to print this book will make a difference! **Everyone who donates \$20 or more will receive a copy of "What is Marxism all about?"**

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Mass protest in Panama targets regime's policies

Fifteen thousand people marched in protest in Panama City on March 18, defying President Ricardo Martinelli's attempts at intimidation. Police actions blocking access stopped thousands more from taking part as the police detained workers carrying construction union banners and stopped and searched buses carrying demonstrators.

Outrage over the imposition of a new tax reform, changes in social security, the high cost of living and an educational reform that harms the people had provoked this first such protest since supermarket magnate Martinelli took office in July 2009.

Aware of the growing protest mood, Martinelli's government began a campaign of repression directed particularly against the construction workers' and teachers' unions. Two days before the march, as members of the Sole National Union of Construction and Similar Workers (Suntracs) were distributing flyers rejecting the government policies and promoting the "Great March of the People" for the 18th to passersby on the streets, police started arresting workers who were on their jobs. Without any judicial order, police raided construction workplaces, jailing 300 workers.

Government minister José Raúl Mulino, who is closely tied to Colombia's pro-U.S., fascist Álvaro Uribe regime, was involved in these raids. Mulino is responsible for the establishment of the 11 bases on Panamanian territory that the Pentagon can use. He also oversees the joint border operations with Colombia's army, known for its ties to criminal paramilitaries.

The following is a commentary on the current situation in Panama by the gen-

eral secretary of the Popular Alternative Party, Olmedo Beluche, a leader in the opposition to Martinelli.

The honeymoon with Martinelli ends

The mind-numbing impact of recent elections, induced with the help of the bourgeois media, is beginning to fade. The Panamanian people are awakening from the empty illusion that a government of bankers and business heads could possibly solve the enormous social problems that have accumulated through 20 years of neoliberal "democracy" and bring about the change that everyone wants. [Note: The U.S. invaded Panama in December 1989 and has put the government under its tutelage ever since.]

Following the advice of the same neo-liberal gurus who earlier advised former President Martín Torrijos, Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli has taken advantage of the honeymoon after last May's elections to impose his anti-people program: a tax reform that will draw between \$200 and \$500 million from the pockets of the working and middle class in order to fatten up public finances that feed direct contracting, turning millionaires into multimillionaires; and an attempt to destroy the most militant unions — those of construction workers and of teachers, the former through repression and the latter through an education reform that puts their jobs at risk.

Those who believed the fairy tale about "real change" are now discovering that Martinelli is more of the same. His reality: price increases of basic foods, especially the products he himself sells in his supermarkets; no hope for the 42 percent of the workforce that is underemployed, much less for the 8 percent sunk in open



PHOTO: POPULAR ALTERNATIVE PARTY

unemployment; poor neighborhoods and also "middle class" ones ridden with crime and violence; and industrial and agricultural producers paying higher taxes and receiving no stimulus, of course, since the government is in the hands of import merchants.

But people are waking up from their stupor. The smear campaigns against the trade union movement carried out by well-paid "communicators" have failed, and so have the efforts of thousands of police deployed into the streets, not to fight crime, but to persecute workers, and even more so their violation of the rule of law when they arrested 300 people for distributing flyers and held them in arbitrary detention for three days. The obscenities expressed against the workers by the government and Justice Minister José Raúl Mulino failed to stop the awakening.

Springtime came to Panama on March

18 when more than 15,000 people gathered for the march called by the teachers' associations, trade unions and popular organizations. There could have been more, but the police operation redirecting buses stopped hundreds of people and prevented their arrival. But it does not matter. The people also know that only the people can save the people and that without struggle, there are no victories.

The illusion ended and the struggle has begun, as it did before with the governments of Guillermo Endara, Ernesto Pérez Balladares, Mireya Moscoso and Torrijos. We can only add that along with the struggle for the defense of the social, economic and democratic rights of the Panamanian people, we must also include the struggle to build a political party from below, so that one day there is real change. To that end we are building the Popular Alternative Party. □

Despite U.S. gov't obstacles

Latin American labor leaders start U.S. tour

By Cheryl LaBash
Cleveland

The Latin American Labor Leaders tour kicked off March 21 in Cleveland demanding an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba and its trade and travel ban that prevents workers from exchanging views and direct understanding.

The participation of Gilda Chacón Bravo from the Confederation of Cuban Workers (Central de Trabajadores de Cuba) and the World Federation of Trade Unions has been stalled by the U.S. State Department. Although approved for a visa, her passport is currently held by the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, making it impossible for her to travel and take part in the tour.

Protest letters to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were signed by participants. Martha Grevatt, chair of the Civil and Human Rights Committee of UAW Local 122 and Peoples Fightback Center organizer, chaired the meeting and declared that workers' solidarity could not be stopped and neither would this tour.

A wide cross section of Cleveland



sponsored free trade agreements and the development of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). Quesada's union is a member of ALBA, although Costa Rica is not.

Ignacio Meneses from the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange spoke and translated. Greetings were given by meeting organizers including Deb Kline, Cleveland Jobs with Justice organizer; Brian Stefan-Szittai, director of the Inter Religious Task Force on Central America; Harold Wilson, president of the Cuyahoga-Medina Community Action Program Council of the United Auto Workers; and Tito Boneta, president of UAW Local 1005.

Also present were members of the Amalgamated Transit Union, the Teamsters, the Steelworkers, AFSCME, North Shore Labor Federation Retirees and a representative from the office of Congressman Dennis Kucinich. A generous collection contributed to financing the tour.

The Latin American Labor Leaders tour will meet with workers in Toledo, Ohio; Detroit; Chicago; San Diego; Los Angeles; and New York. Find a complete and updated schedule of public events at laborexchange.blogspot.com. Online donations can be made at that site as well. Media interviews are available by calling 313-575-4933. Overall sponsors are the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange, the World Federation of Trade Unions-Americas and the International Action Center. □



FREE THE CUBAN FIVE

Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort.

Protests denounce U.S. occupation of Iraq

By John Catalinotto

The seventh anniversary of the criminal U.S.-British occupation of Iraq on March 20 gave impetus to demonstrations in cities around the world. Anti-war protesters could not forget the suffering this U.S.-led aggression has imposed on the Iraqis, killing over a million and driving 5 million people into exile.

On top of the Iraq occupation, the Barack Obama administration has begun a serious escalation in Afghanistan, destined to inflict similar damage upon other peoples of that region; it has intensified pilotless bombing of areas of Pakistan; and it threatens to bomb Iran.

This situation aroused protests across the U.S. Regional actions attracting thousands took place in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and San Francisco, initiated by the Answer Coalition and in which many anti-war forces participated.

In **Washington**, some 10,000 people joined the protest, according to organizers. Among the key speakers was Cindy Sheehan, who has been an active spokesperson against U.S. wars since her son, Casey Sheehan, was killed in Iraq in 2004. Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and anti-monopoly fighter Ralph Nader were also featured. Sheehan was arrested as part of a civil disobedience protest following the march.

Protest slogans included demands for jobs at home, not wars abroad, and pointed out how military spending drained wealth away from social benefits. The Bail Out the People Movement and the International Action Center had strong delegations from New York at the demonstration.

Workers World Party leader Larry Holmes was at the protest. "Considering all the activities going on this weekend," Holmes told WW, "we were pleased to see so many people coming out. People came from around the country to show solidarity with the Palestinians, to tell the U.S. to get out of Afghanistan and Iraq, and to refrain from starting a new war against Iran. Young people were ready to march up to the Mortgage Bankers Association and make it a target of the protest. It's a good sign for the future."

In **Los Angeles**, thousands, including many youth of color, gathered at the intersection of Hollywood and Vine and marched down Hollywood Blvd. to the rally site at Highland Ave. There they listened to speakers prominent in left and progressive movements demand an end to U.S. militarism and money for human needs at home and abroad.

In **San Francisco**, 5,000 demonstrators gathered at City Hall Plaza, called by a broad coalition of anti-war, solidarity and social justice organizations.

Under the lead banner "Occupation is a crime — Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine! Fund people's needs — not war and bank bailouts!" speaker after speaker demanded an end to all U.S.-backed military adventures abroad, including U.S. support for the continued occupation of Palestine, while at the same time demanding that funds be used for jobs, health care and education.

One of the most moving talks was given by Father Andres Tamayo, a priest and popular leader who was expelled by the Honduran junta. Tamayo brought soli-

darity greetings on behalf of the people of Honduras who are struggling against the U.S.-backed military government. Father Tamayo stated simply that the land and wealth of Honduras must be returned to its people.

Following the rally, a march moved through downtown San Francisco, passing two hotels, the Hilton and the Four Seasons, to express solidarity with striking hotel workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 2.

Anti-war protesters in **Detroit**, called out by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice, on March 19 demanded that the U.S. immediately stop the wars against Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Somalia, Pakistan and other nations and that the Pentagon budget be used instead for people's needs, including jobs, housing, health care and education.

According to the National Priorities Project, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan alone have cost Michigan taxpayers at



LOS ANGELES

WW PHOTOS: BOB MCCUBBIN



DETROIT

WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER



SAN FRANCISCO

WW PHOTOS: JUDY GREENSPAN



WASHINGTON, D.C.

PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

An unwelcome visitor

We haven't heard that the FBI is investigating the Tea Party gangsters who attacked Black and gay members of the House of Representatives this March. We haven't heard that this arm of the capitalist state is probing into the loan agreements between the big banks and the universities that offer loans to students and turn them into indentured servants.

What we did hear about was that FBI agents have started to harass U.S. residents who visited Cuba in the summer of 2009. According to a news release from the Venceremos Brigade, five people who traveled with the VB to Cuba have been "visited" by the FBI. The VB has been organizing educational and work trips to Cuba since 1969 and has been instrumental in that whole period of 41 years — along with groups like Pastors for Peace more recently — in contesting the onerous U.S. blockade of the Cuban Revolution.

We put "visited" in quotes because this is not like someone politely stopping by for coffee. The FBI wants to get their foot in your door to allow them to talk to you. Any talking can be a problem, as the FBI is known to try to intimidate the people they talk to and also provoke them. Anything you say can and will be held against you and is the equivalent of speaking under oath. Thus the standard good advice, which the VB seems to follow, is simply to refuse to speak.

Another question comes to mind related to this policy of harassment. When President Barack Obama was elected and in the early months of his administration, he gave the impression that he was for improving relations with Cuba, perhaps

even working toward normalization. Though he talked as if he were ready for some sort of progressive negotiations, the U.S. posture toward Cuba hasn't changed one iota for the better.

It hasn't opened up on trade with Cuba. Washington and the European Union have used any pretext — for example, the recent death of a Cuban prisoner during a hunger strike — to wage a hypocritical propaganda campaign against the socialist island. The Pentagon even brought the Fourth Fleet out of mothballs to have it patrol South American waters and the Caribbean, which increases the military threat. And now we get another piece of evidence that the U.S. posture toward Cuba is hostility as usual.

It is — in a sick way — understandable that the U.S. ruling class would want to prevent people in the U.S. from seeing — even under conditions of relative poverty — a society that functions under a system that reinforces mutual solidarity rather than dog-eat-dog. People might start thinking there is a better way of doing things than the way they're done here. And it might look even better to those from U.S. cities and regions with underemployment and unemployment rates of 20 percent or more.

So we applaud the VB's determination to "continue to travel to Cuba." And we join them in their demand that the U.S. government stop harassing those who exercise their constitutional right to travel to Cuba and also tear down the blockade preventing normal trade between the countries.

FBI hands off the Venceremos Brigade! U.S. hands off Cuba! □

Historic rally calls for immigrant rights NEXT STEP – MAY DAY 2010

Continued from page 1
"comprehensive immigration reform." This formulation has regrettably become a cover for a policy that is fraught with danger.

Obama endorsed the reform bill being proposed by Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer of New York and Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.

Although the most progressive wing of the immigrant-rights movement has not made a full analysis of the Schumer bill since it was just recently introduced, preliminary assessments are that it may be like the thoroughly reactionary Sensenbrenner bill called by another name.

For example it calls for a biometric ID system for all U.S. workers. This will be ominous for the entire working class and it may push the undocumented further underground.

In the next few weeks, the most progressive wing of the movement will be addressing these bills. It will be figuring out the next steps of the movement in light of the historic March 21 demonstration.

But one thing is for sure. The March 21 demonstration confirms that May Day 2010 is more important than ever.

Immigrants and supporters are being



WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

told by many that "comprehensive immigration reform" — which means legalization for few and more militarization of society — is the best they are going to get. But history shows that militant action that represents the interests of the working class can win genuine gains.

The voices saying that legalization with no militarization is not realistic are the same voices who told women and Black people that they would never win the right to vote.

A mighty May Day 2010 that brings in not only immigrants but workers who want to fight for jobs, students who demand high-quality public education, youths who want education not jails or military recruitment, progressives fighting the wars abroad and all sectors is the kind of movement that can win the demands of the people, including legalization. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

'Earthquakes'

Taken from a March 7 audio column at www.prisonradio.org.

The events of recent weeks in Haiti and Chile have had impacts far beyond the borders of these countries. These impacts have been global. Literally.

The earthquake in Haiti gave the world a new, dystopian vision of devastation, especially in Port-au-Prince, the capital city of over 2 million souls. The collapse of the presidential palace seemed a symbol of national collapse.

The earthquake in Chile, although many times more powerful than that which shattered Haiti, caused about a thousand times less death.

How could this be, unless it was an illustration of how a moderately wealthy country weathers a catastrophe better than a desperately poor one? By wealth, I mean social well-being, as measured by the stability of homes and building construction.

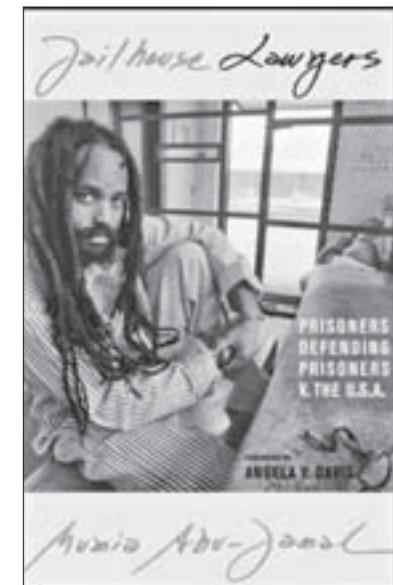
Still, the Chilean quake reportedly affected the earth's very orbit, if only for a millionth of a second.

Wow. Yet, in the midst of immense suffering and loss, lessons emerge.

Like, things can change, drastically in an eye blink. Thus our feelings of control and stability are but illusion.

In politics, revolutions are earthquakes, unseen until the old world crumbles. As in nature's earthquake, the forces that cause these events are often unseen, underground and not foreseen.

They can happen just like that. □



Read more from Mumia Abu-Jamal:

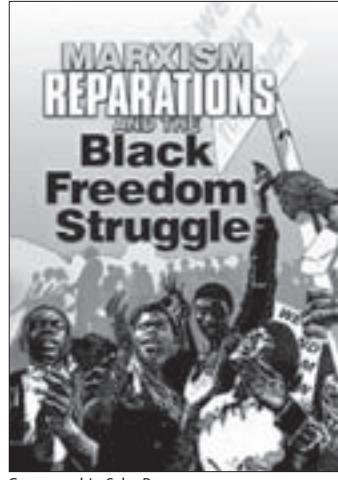
JAILHOUSE LAWYERS: Prisoners Defending Prisoners vs. the U.S.A.

Award-winning journalist and death-row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal presents the stories and reflections of fellow prisoners who have learned to use the court system to advocate for themselves and other prisoners — many of whom are uneducated or illiterate — and in some cases, to win their freedom.

"This is the story of law learned," writes Abu-Jamal, "not in the ivory towers of multi-billion-dollar endowed universities [but] in the bowels of the slave-ship, in the hidden, dank dungeons of America. ... It is law learned in a stew of bitterness, under the constant threat of violence, in places where millions of people live, but millions of others wish to ignore or forget."

Available at [Leftbooks.org](http://leftbooks.org)

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle



Cover graphic: Sahu Barron

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Seismic and social aftershocks rock Chile

An enormously powerful earthquake and tsunami struck just off Chile near the city of Concepción on Feb. 27, wreaking vast destruction in the region, killing at least 800 people and leaving many more missing. On March 10, as a rightist president was sworn into office, three powerful aftershocks struck the country. As of March 15, there are still more than a million people displaced from their homes.

An earthquake's depth, proximity to population centers and the quality of construction of homes and public buildings contribute to the amount of human and property damage it wreaks. Strict building codes applied during the 1970-1973 Popular Unity government led by Salvador Allende kept many structures standing, if damaged. Structures that went up during the neoliberal, that is, profit-driven economy since the military coup of 1973, collapsed, even in middle-income neighborhoods.

Any natural disaster under capitalism exposes the fault lines of the society, and while such a catastrophe can affect anyone in that society, overall it is always the poor who are hurt the most. This could be seen in Haiti and again in Chile.

Workers World newspaper extends its solidarity to the working class and the people of Chile in this time of need. We also protest the corporate media's undue attention to alleged "looting." This was similar to the propaganda that was used in New Orleans and in Haiti to justify state repression and imperialist intervention.

The following is an English translation of excerpts from an excellent on-the-spot description and analysis of

**Statement by
MIR**

the events, which WW previously published in more detail at www.workers.org. They are from a declaration of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) in Chile, which explains how the inequalities and injustices existing in Chile impact on the disaster, what the people need and how revolutionaries should act under these emergency conditions.

The earthquake revealed in the most brutal manner the chains of interests connected with those who are part of the dominant economic and political regime. Although at this moment we believe what is most needed are concrete actions, small though they may be, of solidarity with the families and communities affected by the earthquake, we also consider it necessary to point out the following:

1. The old government-constructed highways and bridges resisted the quake. The new highways in the capital, no. The highways that were privatized under the Coalition governments [the center-left coalition that has won every election since 1988], which were propagated as public-private investment, did not stand up to any single seismic movement and are destroyed. In spite of millions in government subsidies, in spite of contracts, in spite of the daily fees from users, all the overpasses, bridges, pedestrian passages have come down, killing people and injuring many more ...

2. The Christian Democracy, from its control of the Ministry of Housing, left behind so much scandal and corruption in building low-cost housing that the Coalition ended up privatizing the low-cost housing program. Now, with the earthquake, people are being evicted in different parts of the country because

their homes are dangerous. Entire middle class housing complexes are at the point of collapsing, as did the 15-story apartment house in Concepción, killing or trapping more than 100 of its residents. Under capitalism, the business of real estate is not constructing homes but accumulating capital.

3. Major government institutions have functioned slowly and poorly. The Hydrographic Services of the Armed Forces has committed criminal negligence in not knowing how to interpret its own instruments. It sent incorrect information to the National Emergency Office with respect to issuing a tsunami alert. This resulted in a delay of 24 hours before the government recognized that a tsunami was hitting the coasts.

4. As time went by, the earthquake finally showed who it was really affecting ... the poor. In the Bio Bio region, one of the poorest in the country, where unemployment is 10.4 percent and where the majority who work live from day to day, there is no drinkable water, no electricity, no food. Many are unable to return home and are outside without overcoats. The people have broken through the barriers into the supermarkets to obtain what they need to live or to sell or exchange with others: water, milk, diapers, flour, food. ... It is the women who began the movement, as often in our history, for their children and families.

5. The people are turning to direct action to resolve their vital needs. Almost magically, the government declared a State of Catastrophe, which is a form of martial law that allows for the suspension of constitutional guarantees and fundamental rights, without needing congressional approval. The minister of defense announced he was mobilizing 10,000 soldiers.

We in the Movement of the Revolutionary Left are completely in agreement with the necessity, legitimacy and justice in the people's opening the doors of the supermarkets and distribution centers to get their basic necessities that can contribute to alleviating in some way the effects of the earthquake that our country has suffered. Where our members can be an active part of this process, they should join in as quickly as possible. ...

[The soldiers cannot bring order to the poor neighborhoods,] because they have arrived once again to protect only the interests of the ruling classes and the "public order" of the masters of power and wealth.

We call on the revolutionary organizations and the totality of the left organizations to defend the population, to combat speculation with the people's necessities and the attempt of criminal gangs to take advantage of the situation.

We call on the revolutionary organizations and the totality of the left organizations to contribute, to the extent of their capabilities, to raising an emergency struggle platform that will unite struggles and demands representing a broad sector of workers and community members.

Facing the lack of support from the bourgeois government, people to the streets!

To EXPROPRIATE the exploiters IS A PEOPLES RIGHT!

Revolutionaries to the front ranks to gather and distribute food, water and clothing!

The people advance through struggle!
Movement of the Revolutionary Left
(MIR) of Chile
Feb. 28 □

As donors plot, misery continues for Haiti quake survivors

By G. Dunkel

While the vultures are beginning to circle over the money that "donor countries" are planning to pour into Haiti, hundreds of thousands of homeless Haitians — estimates vary between 400,000 and 1.5 million — are trying to survive heavy, violent, tropical downpours that are turning their camps into pools of water and mud.

According to USAID, there are approximately 600,000 displaced people living in 416 makeshift camps in Port-au-Prince. Hundreds of thousands fled to areas not hit by the Jan. 12 earthquake, but some of them are returning because even the meager relief available is only provided in the capital.

The Associated Press reported that during the heavy rains on March 19, in the camp housing over 45,000 people on the site of the former Port-au-Prince golf course, the screams of people knocked off their feet and swept away by the swirling water and mud could be heard over the noise of the rain. No one was reported killed.

Pictures of the encampments show many families using bedsheets, rags, scraps of wood and plastic bags to build their shelters, though a number of people have gotten tents.

Partners In Health Executive Director Ophelia Dahl, who recently returned from Haiti, said at a press conference March 5: "We witnessed hundreds of thousands of people living in makeshift temporary

shelters; spontaneous settlements made of scraps of cardboard and plastic bags. What little people have is soaked, because they're sleeping in the rain, and the makeshift shelters are already breaking down and dissolving. The conditions for the homeless and displaced people are absolutely inhumane and getting worse every single day."

The United Nations has scheduled a "donors conference for Haiti" on March 31 at its headquarters in New York. A "preliminary damage and needs assessment" (PDNA) was drawn up at a conference held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on March 16 and 17.

The preliminary estimate was that to restore Haiti would take \$11.5 billion, with 50 percent of that being used for social programs, 17 percent for infrastructure and 15 percent for environmental and disaster analysis. (Christian Science Monitor, March 17)

A number of commentators from liberal newspapers and Web sites have pointed out that donor promises are rarely kept — 25 percent is the normal level. But a widely representative group of Haitian NGOs and community groups, ranging from peasant organizations and women's organizations to community-based associations, issued a condemnation of how this PDNA was formulated. (AlterPress, March 18)

This statement charges, "The formulation of the PDNA ... comes from a process characterized by a quasi-total exclusion of

Haitian civil society and the weak and uncoordinated participation of the representatives of the Haitian government."

It continues, "The path traced by this PDNA for the reconstruction of Haiti cannot satisfy the expectations of the Haitian people because this process is not conceived to promote development, just restoration, while the context in Haiti

demands a complete reorientation of the development model."

In other words, the PDNA is designed to restore a capitalist state in Haiti but the Haitian people need a better model.

There is an ongoing discussion in the Haitian community in New York about holding a demonstration at the U.N. against this conference on March 31. □

'Where's Haiti relief money?'



About 50 people, mainly high school youth, took on the American Red Cross at their New York headquarters March 22, asking "Where's the money? Where is the \$250 million in U.S. Red Cross donations going? Haiti's people are in dire need of shelter!" The protest was called by the Friday Haiti Relief Coalition and December 12 Movement.

— Report and photo by G. Dunkel

1937: Huelga de brazos caídos en tienda Woolworth de Detroit

Cómo las mujeres trabajadoras abrieron el camino

El siguiente fragmento de "El Capitalismo de Bajos Salarios" por Fred Goldstein, recuerda la importancia de una huelga poco conocida que duró ocho días y se extendió por todo el país, liderada por mujeres trabajadoras y que organizó la tienda tipo Wal-Mart de la década de los años treinta y a otras empresas de servicios.

Una de las principales características del nuevo capitalismo de bajos salarios es la creación de millones de puestos de trabajo con baja remuneración en la venta al por menor. Esto lo ilustra Wal-Mart, el mayor empleador en los Estados Unidos. La idea propuesta de que este gran sector de la clase obrera está más allá de la organización es realmente la auto-justificación de la estrechez y el letargo de la dirigencia sindical actual.

En este sentido, vale la pena tomarse el tiempo para examinar la década de los años treinta y un capítulo casi olvidado en la historia de ese período. Nos referimos a la huelga de brazos caídos por las trabajadoras de la tienda Woolworth en 1937 que se hizo conocida en todo el ámbito nacional en ese tiempo. Esta huelga provocó una ola de rebeliones de huelgas de brazos caídos por las filas obreras que condujo a la organización en todo en el país de trabajadores/as de tiendas al por menor, hoteles, restaurantes, lavanderías, etc.

El relato de esta huelga y sus consecuencias han sido preservadas por Dana Frank en el capítulo de su libro "Tres huelgas: Mineros, músicos, dependientes, y el espíritu de lucha en el siglo pasado de los gremios laborales".

Éstos son algunos de los aspectos más destacados de este episodio.

La victoria del Sindicato de Trabajadores Automovilísticos (UAW) contra la General Motors a través de la huelga de brazos caídos en la planta Fisher Body en Flint, concluyó el 11 de febrero de 1937. La huelga de la GM había dejado inactivos a 112.000 trabajadores. Días después de terminar, se dio una ola de huelgas en Detroit, incluyendo a trabajadores de lavanderías, mujeres trabajadoras de limpieza, estudiantes de secundaria que trabajaban como trabajadores de servicios de entrega y otros más.

El 27 de febrero, 16 días después de la victoria en la GM, más de 100 jóvenes tra-

bajadoras en uno de los 40 almacenes de Woolworth en la ciudad dejaron de trabajar, desalojaron a los clientes, cerraron las puertas y llamaron al gerente a una conferencia con todas ellas. Exigieron aumentos, pago de tiempo y medio después de las 40 horas de trabajo, uniformes pagados por la compañía, permiso de almuerzo, descansos, el reconocimiento del Sindicato de Meseros y Meseras y la contratación sólo a través del sindicato. El sindicato sólo tenía un representante allí. Ninguna de las mujeres había estado anteriormente en un sindicato.

La audacia de las huelguistas puede ser apreciada por el hecho de que estaban en contra del minorista más grande de la época. En 1937, Woolworth tenía más de 2.000 tiendas en los EEUU, Canadá y Cuba. Había 737 tiendas en Gran Bretaña y 82 en Alemania. "Era", en palabras de Frank, "como una huelga contra Wal-Mart, el Gap, y McDonald's todos al mismo tiempo".

Empleaba a 65.000 trabajadores/as, casi todas mujeres jóvenes. Era brutalmente anti-sindical. Y tenía un carácter racista, empleando solo a personas blancas. Woolworth tenía una política de desagrado hacia su fuerza laboral. Dice Frank, "la fórmula de Woolworth es la misma que la utilizada por McDonald's, Circuit City, y otras grandes cadenas de hoy. Si el trabajo es lo suficientemente poco cualificado, una enorme fuerza laboral potencial se abre, y si la rotación de personal es alta, tanto mejor para los administradores que entonces tienen de dónde elegir". Más importante aún era que la compañía escogía a mujeres jóvenes que tenían pocas opciones en el mercado laboral, quienes probablemente trabajarían temporalmente, y quienes "en teoría, eran menos propensas a sindicalizarse".

La huelga de brazos caídos duró una semana, hasta el 5 de marzo. Irrumpió en los medios de comunicación durante los primeros días. El Sindicato de Empleados de Hoteles y Restaurantes fue invitado por las huelguistas después de que comenzaran el cese de trabajo. Durante el transcurso de la huelga el sindicato de cocineros suministró las comidas y el sindicato de músicos suministró entretenimiento. Trabajadores/as de hoteles de toda la ciudad llegaban al lugar para unirse a la protesta y mostrar solidaridad.

El líder de la UAW, Homer Martin,

llegó a Woolworth para promover apoyo sindical. El líder de la Detroit Wayne County AFL se presentó en la huelga el primer día. Mostró solidaridad a la UAW (afiliada a la CIO) en apoyo de la huelga y donó dinero. El líder de la UAW Local 7 Chrysler mostró su apoyo. El presidente nacional del sindicato HERE anunció planes para llegar a Detroit para poner al sindicato internacional en apoyo a la huelga. Se estableció antes de su llegada.

Cinco horas después de que comenzara la huelga, Kresge, el mayor competidor de Woolworth, aumentó los salarios de sus trabajadores de \$14 a \$17. En todo el centro de Detroit, los patronos estaban dando a los/as trabajadores/as aumentos salariales en un intento por evitar similares huelgas de brazos caídos.

El sindicato cerró una segunda tienda con una huelga de brazos caídos, y amenazó con extender la huelga a las 40 tiendas Woolworth. El apoyo llegó desde todo el país. Los empleados al por menor en Nueva York comenzaron una campaña de solidaridad.

En Detroit misma, las huelgas se esparcieron entre miles de trabajadores/as locales, desde meseras a trabajadores/as culinarios/as, a trabajadores/as en cafeterías, hoteles y fábricas.

El 4 de marzo la compañía U.S. Steel se rindió ante el Comité Organizador de Trabajadores del Acero. Aunque esto copó todos los titulares de los periódicos, el 5 de marzo la tienda minorista más grande en el mundo se rindió y todos/as los/as trabajadores/as de Woolworth ganaron todas sus demandas, incluyendo el sindicato. El sindicato ganó un contrato uniforme para todas las 40 tiendas en Detroit, que cubría a 2.500 trabajadores/as.

Los efectos de la huelga se dejaron sentir por un año. En Detroit, hubo huelgas de brazos caídos en Lerner's, en las tiendas Federated Department y en numerosas tiendas del centro de la ciudad. En la ciudad de Nueva York, los/as empleados/as minoristas hicieron huelgas similares en cinco tiendas del H. L. Green. En St. Louis del Este, Ill., los/as trabajadores/as ganaron un contrato uniforme que cubría a Woolworth's, W. T. Grant, Newberry, y a las tiendas de Kresge a través de la ciudad. Una victoria semejante tuvo lugar entre los/as trabajadores/as minoristas en Akron, Ohio, lugar de las huelgas de brazos caídos más importantes de los/as tra-

jadores/as del caucho. Unos/as 1.500 trabajadores/as en 33 tiendas de Woolworth en St. Louis ganaron un contrato.

Para finales del año, cadenas de tiendas de variedades, de comestibles y por departamentos habían sido organizadas en sindicatos en St. Paul y Duluth, Minnesota.; Tacoma y Centralia, Washington.; Superior, Wisconsin.; y en San Francisco, California.

En Seattle, escribió Frank, "3.000 empleados/as en 23 almacenes, incluyendo Sears, J. C. Penney, Frederick & Nelson's, el Bon Marché y Lerner's ganaron no solamente la semana de 40 horas de trabajo sino un aumento de sueldo 'estimado a aumentar los ingresos de los/as empleados/as por lo menos en un medio-millón de dólares'. Después de 60 años más tarde, los sindicatos en las tiendas por departamento a través del país le deben su existencia en parte a la huelga de Woolworth".

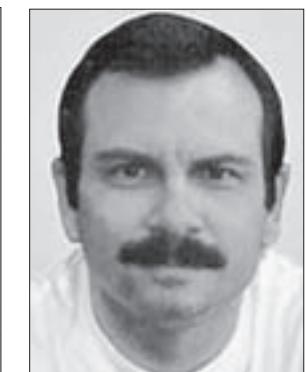
Esta es una lucha importante en la historia del movimiento de los/as trabajadores/as. Wal-Mart no es más antisindical hoy que Woolworth lo fuera en 1937. Esta lucha muestra que no es la estructura de la industria minorista lo que determina si puede ser organizada o no, sino el clima del movimiento sindical, el nivel general de lucha en el país y su efecto sobre los/as trabajadores/as.

Ver "Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century", por Howard Zinn, Dana Frank y Robin G. Kelley; Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.



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